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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/21/2020
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [OIIP](#) [KPAO](#) [KDEM](#) [BM](#)
SUBJECT: BURMA NEWSPAPER MISREPRESENTS USG HAITI RESPONSE;
GOB OFFICIAL EXPRESSES REGRET

REF: STATE 5277

Classified By: CDA Larry Dinger for Reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

Burma Newspaper Quotes Latin America Critics of U.S.
Assistance to Haiti

11. (U) The Government of Burma (GOB)-controlled Burmese-language newspaper "The Mirror" included in its January 18 edition (available on the Qreet January 20) excerpts of an article off the internet titled "Leftist Leaders Say US is Using Relief Mission as Pretext to Occupy Haiti." The story reported: "The United States is using the humanitarian crisis in Haiti as an excuse to occupy the earthquake-hit island nation, two of Washington's most vocal leftist critics in Latin America implied at the weekend. To support the massive aid operation following last Tuesday's devastating earthquake, the US was set to have up to 10,000 troops on the ground or in the waters off Haiti by early this week."

CDA Discussion with Ministry of Information DG

12. (SBU) As guided by reftel, the CDA attempted to raise U.S. objections directly with the Mirror; but that newspaper refused to arrange a meeting or take a call absent permission from the Ministry of Information, its GOB overseer. The CDA then phoned Ministry of Information Director General U Ye Htut to register the complaint, to emphasize the U.S./UN/world-community partnership, and to press for informed and responsible coverage of U.S. actions and intentions. The DG was aware of the article. He said he understood why the U.S. would find it objectionable. He promised to brief the Minister of Information and the Mirror editor. He then asked if the USG has responded to President Ortega's allegations, saying that it might be possible to arrange a follow-up article providing the U.S. perspective.

Comment and Action Request

13. (C) From what we can determine, official Washington has not responded to President Ortega's alleged statement. Please advise how, if at all, we should respond to the DG's offer to facilitate a follow-on piece with USG comment. The

upside would be to correct the record; the downside would be to flag the offensive theme again. As of today, the Mirror piece is the only distorted piece on U.S. relief efforts in Haiti that has appeared in Burmese media.

DINGER